

Pam  
India

INDIA  
and the  
WAR

By S. Chandrasekhar

NEW YORK CITY

1941





*"We hold these truths to be self evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."*

The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, In Congress, July 4, 1776.

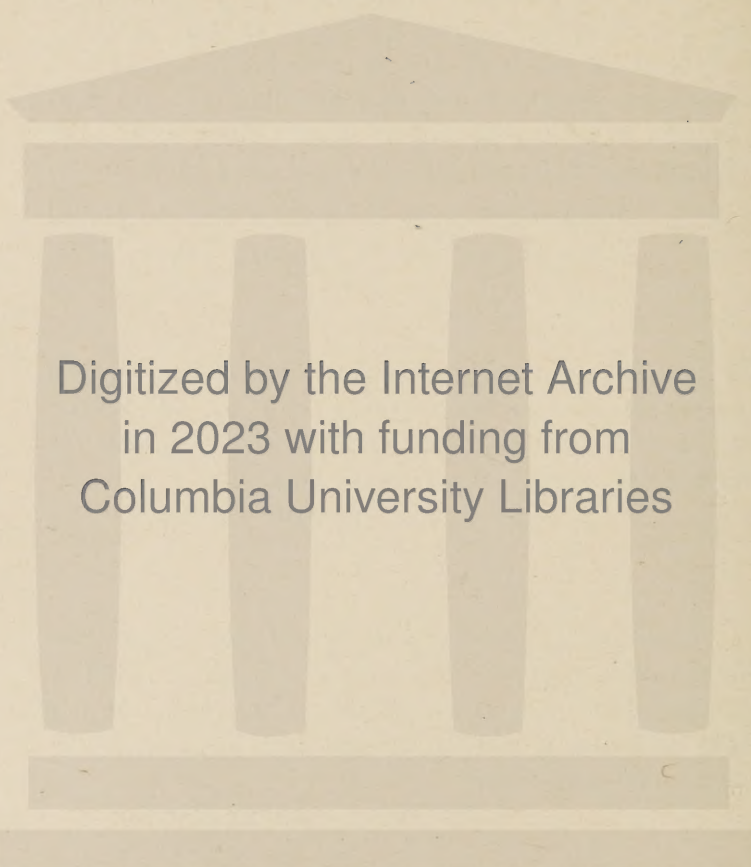
*"We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel in the crown of the King, which more than all other Dominions and Dependencies constitutes the glory and the strength of the British Empire."*

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

*" . . . That then is why we are at war—to save our freedom and the world's freedom from being murdered. . . . And so the principal war aim of my people and of those who are fighting with us is to win this life and death struggle for the cause of human freedom."*

RT. HON. VISCOUNT HALIFAX





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# INDIA AND THE WAR

The war in Europe more than even the tragic struggle in the Far East arrests our attention, for our destinies whether we are in it or out of it, are linked up with its outcome. The present world clash between countries with or without empires and countries struggling for empires has endangered the freedom of half of humanity bringing in its trail death, disease, starvation and humiliation. Only a few years ago, we thought all was well with the world. We thought we had peace because we were not at war. But that peace was an imaginary one, for the world was full of injustice slavery and violence. The root causes of all unrest were there—smouldering but not in open conflagration. But to-day they have burst into an open flame, and so man has gone back to his periodical preoccupation of destroying himself. But strangely in the midst of this international anarchy the talk of this war being fought to save democracy, to ensure freedom and perpetuate peace is loudest.

While small imperialist nations like France and Holland lie prostrate under Nazi heels, Imperialist Britain continues to battle for life. Hitler is out for an empire, for really there is no difference between Fascism and Imperialism. One inevitably leads to the other. One cannot be ended without ending the other. But what is Britain fighting for? To make the world safe for democracy or to ensure freedom of small western European nations or to safeguard the liberties of the English speaking peoples of the world or to end the war? She would have us believe that she is out fighting for all these and that is apparently why she rushed in aid of poor Poland. But before she can crush Fascist aggression she must end her own imperialist domination and give up her empire. The truth is the British imperialists are no more concerned about the Poles than they are about the Chinese. What Britain is concerned about is the preservation of her own colonial empire and the monopoly she enjoys in exploiting the colonial labor and raw materials. Britain certainly cannot be fighting for Democracy, Freedom, Justice or Peace for she herself denies these in the most flagrant manner to hundreds of millions of people in India, parts of Africa, Burma, West Indies, Federated Malay States and other colonies too numerous to mention. And since India is the



central problem of British imperialism, it will be interesting to enquire into Britain's war aims in the light of her doings in India. The immediate question to India is whether there is any difference between the Allies and the Axis powers so far as her freedom is concerned.

## Some facts about India

Out of every five persons in the world one is an Indian. 400 million peoples inhabit a vast subcontinent which stretches nearly 2,000 miles from north to south and about 1,800 miles from east to west (excluding Burma), with an area equal to that of the whole of Europe, excluding Russia. India with an area three fifths that of the United States has a population almost three times as large—that is roughly one fifth of the human race. Two thirds of this population consist of Hindus, and a fifth of the total population are Muslims.

British India, or that India which is directly under the rule of the Viceroy, comprises two thirds of the country's area and three quarters of its population. This area is divided into eleven provinces, each under a British governor. The Indian States ruled by the Indian princes or Maharajas under British direction cover more than a third of the total area, and their population falls only a little short of a quarter of the total population. There are British Residents, political advisers to the native princes, in almost every one of the 562 of these native states.

India is ruled by a mere handful of Englishmen, 8,000 in all, in the higher imperial services of the administration. But the total number of Englishmen that the Indian taxpayer supports, directly or indirectly, is nearly 300,000. Behind them, as the all too visible symbol of physical force, is the British garrison of 80,000 soldiers, including British military officers for the control of the Indian army of 725,000 men who are mostly in the lower ranks.

Three and half centuries ago, British rule in India began almost with the founding of the East India Company in the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. And after the first War of Independence, officially called the Indian Mutiny of 1857, India came under the direct rule of the crown during Queen Victoria's reign. And to-day the British contend that their rule has brought a backward, semi-barbaric Asiatic people the fruits of enlightenment, culture, education, and western civilization.

But in fact the story of the British rule is the story of the shattering of the village Indian economy, destruction of her handicrafts and cottage industries and robbing of her economic self-sufficiency. Previously, weaving and spinning and countless other useful occupations had been carried on by each family in India, but the British by levying fines were

able to destroy this self-sufficient economy and replace it with nothing but dependence on British manufactures.

India is a land of vast potential resources. She possesses large reserves of coal estimated at 36 billions of tons. Her iron ore deposits are also large, estimated at 3 billion tons as against the 254 million tons of Great Britain and the 1,374 million tons of Germany. She has the second largest manganese resources in the world. As for her water power she is second only to the U.S.A. in her potential resources. Despite all this latent wealth India has been made to remain backward in her industrial development to serve as a source of raw material for English factories, a market for British industrial products, and a field for her capital investment.

Without going into the comparatively prosperous days of pre-British rule in India, let us note some of the present day blessings of British domination. India pays Great Britain \$600,000,000 annually for what are called Home Charges which include salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, holidays, interests and dividends, for the trouble the British undergo in ruling India.

Britain's total capital investment in India approximates \$7,800,000,000 which yields annually a profit of a little less than \$900,000,000! The interest that is collected annually on the Indian National Debt, which was incurred by the British in conquering and subjugating the country is \$1,364,000,000. Britain checks any large scale industrialization of India by a score of ingenious methods for the simple reason that she wants India's raw materials only to sell them back as manufactured commodities, reaping tremendous profits in the process. The result is that there are only 5,000,000 poorly organized urban workers scattered all over the 2,400 small and big cities of India. These workers—men and women, skilled and unskilled—earn, when they are in employment, between eight and fourteen cents a day! 24 per cent of these workers live in one-room tenements!

Industrial workers in the strict sense of the term, working in the organized industries, still number only 1.6 millions or less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the total population.

There are at least 40 million landless semi-skilled workers—rather artisans—unemployed for ten months in the year.

The lot of the peasants and agricultural workers is still worse. The peasantry form 74 per cent of the population and live in India's 740,000 villages. The average annual income of an agriculturist is roughly \$15—less than 5 cents a day! He and his family have to live on this income, and he therefore borrows money from the local money lender at the rate of from 22 to 160 per cent interest. Then he has to pay taxes to local or private landlords, to the provincial or state government as well as taxes on water wells, cattle, grazing lands, forests, with the result that the total agricultural rural indebtedness to-day amounts to \$2,800,000,000. With these hereditary debts to the Government, the landlord, and



the money lender, the Indian peasant is born, brought up and is buried in debts.

The conditions of those who are neither workers nor peasants are no better. There are at present only 7 out of every 100 who have an annual income of \$300 and over. The average annual income per capita is \$13.50 as compared with \$369.00 in England and \$680.00 in the United States. This blatant poverty exists despite India's latent wealth. All her wealth has found its way not to the pockets of her people but to the top heavy administration of her rulers. Thus since the world began there has in all probability never been a capital investment which has brought in such a revenue as that won by the Indian exploitation.

What about education and literacy? Barring the microscopic minority that attend India's eighteen universities, elementary school education has spread so very little that literacy is very low. There is one elementary school to every ten villages which means that 500,000 villages have no educational facilities whatsoever. 92 per cent of the total population are illiterate, literacy being defined by the Government Census authorities as "ability to read or write any Indian language." In pre-British India education was far more widespread, for there were religious schools in every village. Those schools were not up to the modern standards, perhaps, but they certainly brought education within the reach of the commoner. The annual Government expenditure on elementary education to-day is 19 cents per head!

As for health, medicine and sanitation, the picture is a standing scandal of the British rule. Excluding the few splendid American, Indian and other missionary hospitals there are only 6,700 to serve the teeming millions. That is, for every 163 square miles there is one small hospital. The lack of medical facilities added to the poor nourishment, bad sanitation and appalling housing conditions lead to frequent epidemics. The influenza epidemic of 1918-19 alone accounted for the death of more than 12 millions, which is more than the total loss of all nations in the last Great War. Five to six million people die every year from Malaria, Tuberculosis, Dysentery and other preventable and curable diseases.

The All India infant mortality rate is 171 per 1,000 and in overcrowded cities like Bombay the rate is highest in the world—374 per 1,000. Out of every 1,000 children born in India 45 die before reaching the age of five. This can be characterized only as the slaughter of the innocents. As for maternal mortality, 200,000 mothers die annually during child birth! In other words, for 1,000 births India has a maternal mortality of 24.05. The corresponding figure for England is 4.5. This deplorable state of affairs is directly traceable to the low level of living and the different grades of starvation that exist among the masses. According to Sir John Magaw's (British Director of Public Health with the Government of India) estimate of 1933, 39 per cent of the population is well nourished, 41 poorly nourished and 20 per cent are on a semi-



starvation level. This among other factors contribute to the low expectation of life at birth. The following life expectancy table shows that India occupies the last place:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Males</i> (years)	<i>Females</i> (years)
Australia	55.2	58.84
Denmark	54.9	57.9
England	58.53	52.38
France	45.74	49.13
Holland	44.82	48.33
<i>India</i>	<i>25.59</i>	<i>26.51</i>
Japan	43.97	44.85
Italy	44.24	44.83
Norway	54.84	55.72
Sweden	54.56	55.98
Switzerland	49.35	52.15
U.S.A.	59.12	62.67

The annual Indian budget is an outstanding indictment of British rule in India. For the last decade the average annual income of India has amounted to \$6,314,000,000. 62 per cent of this revenue before 1930 went for the support of the army of occupation—that is India's military burden. This standing army is supposed to be for the defense of India against foreign aggression and revolt from within and yet as we shall see a little later India is said to be defenseless. In fact India is made to support this huge army to threaten India's legitimate and peaceful aspirations, to fight Britain's imperial wars and in general to protect Britain's commercial and military interests in the east.

An analysis of the latest available official Indian budget of 1937-38 reveals that 42.8 per cent of India's total revenue was spent on military preparations. Granting this was due to war jitters and the impending calamity, conditions before 1939 were no better. The following Indian budget for a representative normal year like 1935-36 reveals the real state of affairs:

Military expenses	23.9 per cent
Interest on national debt	22.5 " "
Police and jail	9.6 " "
Civil administration	8.7 " "
Education	5.7 " "
Medicine and Public Health	2.6 " "
Agriculture and Industry	2.1 " "
Miscellaneous	24.9 " "

This means that the army, the police and the national debt and the bureaucracy which represent the coercive apparatus of the state consume 67 per cent of the total revenue as against only 10.4 per cent spent on social services and nation building activities. These few facts are enough to convince any impartial student of Indian affairs of the nature of the British rule in India. Indian troops were used by the British in their occupation of Egypt in 1882, during the Boer war in South Africa and in the suppression of the Boxer rebellion in China and of course in the last Great War against Germany. The Indian taxpayer pays, and Indian manhood is slaughtered to strengthen British imperialism all over the world.

## India struggles against the imperialist war

On September 3rd, 1939, the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared India at war!

But as early as 1927, the Indian National Congress (the premier political organization of the country which has been fighting for India's freedom for the last half century under the leadership of Gandhi, Nehru and others) laid down its attitude clearly towards war. It declared that the Indian people could not permit the exploitation of Indian resources for the furtherance of imperialist aims and that they would not cooperate in any imperialist war. Year after year the policy was reiterated. And as the international situation began to grow worse in recent years, the Congress made it clear that India could be no party to a war imposed on her without the consent of her people and that any such imposition would be resented and resisted. In February 1938, the Congress in its annual session at Haripura passed the following resolution on "Foreign policy and war danger":

"In view of the grave danger of wide spread and devastating war which overshadows the world the Congress desires to state afresh the policy of the Indian people with regard to foreign relations and war. The people of India desire to live in peace and friendship with their neighbors and with all other countries and for this purpose wish to remove all causes of conflict between them. Striving for their own freedom and independence as a nation they wish to respect the freedom of others and to build up their strength on the basis of international cooperation and good will. Such cooperation must be founded on a world order, and a free India will gladly associate itself with such an order and stand for disarmament and collective security. But world cooperation is impossible of achievement so long as the international conflict remains and one nation dominates over another and imperialism holds sway. In order to establish world peace on an enduring basis imperialism and the exploitation of one people by another must end.



"During the past few years there has been a rapid and deplorable deterioration in the international situation. Fascist aggression has increased and unabashed defiance of international obligations has become the avowed policy of Fascist powers. British foreign policy in spite of its evasions and indecisions consistently supported the Fascist powers in Germany, Spain and the Far East and must therefore largely shoulder the responsibility for the progressive deterioration of the world situation. That policy still seeks an arrangement with Nazi Germany and has developed closer relations with rebel Spain. It is helping in the drift of imperialist world war.

"India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her man power and resources to be exploited in the interests of British imperialism. Nor can India join any war without the express consent of her people. The Congress therefore entirely disapproves of war preparations being made in India and large scale manoeuvres and air raid precautions by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India. In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war this will be resisted."

But on September 3rd, 1939, within a few hours of the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons declaring a state of war between England and Germany, the Viceroy in India declared India a belligerent country. The British rulers decided, and India was at war! Nobody was consulted, not even the popular provincial governments. Neither the Central Legislative Assembly nor the accredited political leaders of the country were approached. The people's consent was not sought and not given. Other countries in the empire like Canada, South Africa and Australia and Ireland in spite of its strategic position were allowed to settle the question of their entering the war by the vote of their respective legislatures without any dictation of the British Government. But India of course is not a Dominion, it is just a colony for the benefit of the British.

## The Congress Statement

On September 14, 1939, a few days after the country was declared belligerent, the Indian National Congress met, considered India's position and issued a long statement on the war crisis. It said that if the war was to defend the status quo, imperialist possessions and colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India could have nothing to do with it. If on the other hand, the issues at stake were democracy and freedom, then India was vitally interested in them and would throw in her lot to fight the forces against those cherished ideals. It stated afresh its attitude to Fascism. The resolution said:

"The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress have

given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the congress and only a month ago the committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of the Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from the policy of the British Government the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. Since then the British Government have declared India a belligerent country, promulgated ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill and taken other far reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government."

## India and Fascism

The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. India's opposition to totalitarianism and all that the dictators stand for is uncompromising. Their imperialist ambitions, their bigoted racial theories, their exaltation of the state at the expense of the individual, their intolerance towards criticism, their denial of the democratic principle and their denial of religion, their anti-Semitism—all these are alien to India's inner spirit. India has condemned the aggression in which the Fascist powers have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well established principles and recognized standards of civilized behavior. India has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address to the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in 1936 declared:

"Where do we stand then, we who labor for a free India? Inevitably we take our stand with the progressive forces of the world which are ranged against Fascism and Imperialism."

The Congress has further stated that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision or attempt to use India's resources for purposes not approved by them will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If cooperation is desired in



a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition and the country cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Cooperation must be between equals and by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India in the recent past faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.

The Committee further stated that the Governments of Great Britain and France had declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-18 the declared war aims were preservation of democracy and the freedom of small nations and the very governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies, the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent states.

Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression, in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it, in Czechoslovakia and in Spain, democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Congress is in entire agreement. The Congress believe that the people of the west are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices, But again and again, the ideals and sentiments of the people and those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

India is convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily

end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference and must guide their own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defense against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy utilizing the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity. The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill politically, socially and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions that have grown alarmingly since the last Great War. It will not be finally resolved till those conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another and on a reorganization of economic relations on juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem for she has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganization. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom to-day is indivisible and any attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The Congress have noted that many rulers of Indian states have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favor of democracy abroad their first concern should be the introducing of democracy within their own states in which to-day undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the rulers themselves as has been painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

As the Congress view recent events in Europe, Africa and Asia and most particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being or are going to be acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and Fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and in the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new



world order India is eager and desirous to help in every way. But it cannot associate itself or offer any cooperation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the committee desire to take no final decision at this stage so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and which she disapproves.

## Britain's war aims

The Congress therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy, imperialism and the new order that is envisaged and in particular how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike will be welcomed by the people of all countries but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it to the largest possible extent for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honored. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action to-day and give shape to the future.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human lives during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities. Cold blooded massacre, torture and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and unless checked and ended will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of Fascism and Imperialism are removed. To that end the Congress are prepared to give their cooperation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of Imperialism and for the purpose of retaining the structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

The Congress wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to the victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to the victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and imperialist oppression."

## The First World War

This was the attitude of the Congress just after the war broke out. In asking for Britain's war aims and their application to India's political status, the Congress was not indulging in any opportunist tactics. There was no bargaining spirit in its demand for it went to the extent of proclaiming that Britain's difficulty was not India's opportunity. The reason for India's insistent demand for Britain's war aims in relation to India's present and post war status apart from its obvious reasonableness is based on bitter experience.

During the last Great War India became the victim of vague promises and empty assurances. At that time, Gandhi and the Congress shelved their claim for independence and supported the allies to make the world safe for democracy. India thought that the first world war was to end war. Like some other neutral countries she rushed to help Britain save "poor little Belgium." And during the war the British in India parodied Wilson's slogans of "self-determination" and the "rights of small nations."

India, impressed with these cries, contributed six hundred million dollars to the Allied war machine. War loans to the extent of seven hundred million dollars were purchased by her. She sent out 1,250,000,000 dollars worth of finished products to the Allies. India's total war effort included ships, hospitals, ambulance units, and goods of every description. The economic results were that, with the exception of a few capitalists who became millionaires, the millions of the common people suffered greatly. The low living standard of the masses was further depressed. The economic drain was so heavy that they had to face starvation in the post war years. Resistance to disease was so lowered that the influenza epidemic alone, that broke out after the war, accounted for the death of over 12 millions.

During that war the sacrifice of the flower of India's manhood was even more impressive. About 1,338,620 Indians were dispatched to the various theatres of war in France, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia—178,000 more than all the troops contributed by the Dominions of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. And of the million Indians of all ranks who went overseas, the casualties in killed, wounded



and missing amounted to over 121,000. And in terms of money the Great War added \$153,000,000 to India's National Debt.

What was the outcome of all this cooperation, help and sacrifice? With the successful termination of hostilities, India naturally asked Britain to fulfill her wartime pledges about self-government for India. But all that she got in return were intense repression, martial law in the Punjab, flogging, beating and shooting and imprisonment, culminating in the notorious massacre at Amritsar in the Punjab. At this town in 1919 the British General Dwyer ordered troops to fire on a huge meeting of unarmed men, women and children gathered in an enclosure without any means of exit. The 1,600 rounds of ammunition which was fired, killed, according to the official figures, 379 and left 1,200 wounded. Then the censorship over India was so heavy that it was eight months before these facts were known to the British public. General Dwyer's action was approved by the House of Lords, and his aristocratic friends presented him with a purse of £20,000! Out of all this national sorrow and travail caused by British ruthlessness was born the Non-Cooperation Movement of Gandhi.

Since then for two decades India has been carrying on her fight for freedom non-violently. The tragic disillusionment of the last World War and the recurring political crises between India and England during the post war years revealed that India gave her men, money and material to Britain only to strengthen her imperialist hands on India and elsewhere. Gandhi, the loyalist, became Gandhi, the rebel. That vast and tragic gulf between Britain's promises and performances is still green in India's memory. And therefore India to-day wants no more of Britain's pious promises and sanctimonious pledges, but wants something more tangible and that right now.

## England's answer

But the answer that the British Government gave India was one of complete evasion, for how could she say without losing face that she was fighting for freedom and democracy while denying them to India. Nevertheless the Viceroy stated that "at the end of the war His Majesty's Government will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in framing such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable." It should be stated that this statement promises neither independence nor Dominion status nor even a modification of India's present political status. It simply promises that at the end of the war this problem will be discussed and nothing more. Even in this illusory promise can be seen the strategy of the British. Among the interests and parties invited will

be India's autocratic princes, some reactionary religious leaders and of course the British financial and commercial interests in India. The Congress resented this affront and as a first measure of non-cooperation directed the eight provincial governments that it controlled to resign in protest. On their resignation the British provincial Governors tried to form alternative cabinets but failed. An emergency was declared, the constitution was suspended and the Governors assumed autocratic control. This irresponsible government is supposed to be advised from time to time by a group of Senior British Civil servants.

The Government expected that the nation would acquiesce in their vague assurances and tamely agree to fight her imperialist battles. But the growing volume of resentment and anger of the people surprised the Viceroy and he made two proposals to reconcile the Indian opposition.

One was to expand the existing Executive Council of the Viceroy. This kind of addition of a few more chairs to an august body with little or no powers meant nothing more than a few more fat salaried jobs to compromising Indians. This effort to buy up certain political leaders was naturally shunned by the Congress. This clearly demonstrated that the Congress was not fighting for big jobs for the few, but for real power for the many. The few chairs that were added to the Council Chamber therefore remained vacant.

The second proposal was to create a War Advisory Council composed of representatives of different elements of India's national life. The real task of this Board was to formally register approval of the Viceroy's actions and keep the Indian public informed of the progress of the war. According to the British Government this was granting "progressive realization of self-government" to India! The Congress naturally rejected this meaningless offer and asked the Government to convene a Constituent Assembly on the basis of free and adult franchise to frame India's constitution. The outcome of such a Constituent Assembly would be the same as that of the Continental Congress at the time of the American Revolution. The verdict of such a Congress would be clear. It would end British domination in India.

Having been checkmated at every turn the perplexed British Government fell back on its traditional methods of thwarting India's legitimate aspirations. But how?

According to the British, the moment they declare India free there will be not only civil war between the Hindus and the Muslims and other different communal and minority groups, but also foreign aggression. Furthermore, the British declare that they must honor their obligations to the Indian Maharajas. On this note the British Government finally banged the door on all negotiation for a free India, on the ground that a complete agreement between all groups and communities—nationalist and communal, progressive and reactionary—was a necessary prerequisite for any further consideration of India's case.



## The Muslim and Communal question

But what is this Muslim—communal and minority—problem that bulks so large in the British argument?

There are in India 80 million Muslims whose ancestors entered the country a few centuries ago attracted by its wealth. Some of them by force of arms became subsequently rulers of parts of India, married and mingled with the indigenous Hindu population and finally settled down permanently in the country with the result that there is no resemblance, except in their faith, between them and their original stock. These followers of the Prophet are to-day an integral part of India. Most of them originally were Hindus who were forced to embrace Islam at the point of the sword. Their appearance, customs, and dress are the same as those of their Hindu neighbors. Like other Indians, they desire freedom for India and have therefore joined the Congress, and are fighting to-day shoulder to shoulder with their Hindu brethren for India's freedom. The Congress commands the confidence of the Muslims, for there are hundreds of thousands of them on its membership rolls. When the Congress contested general elections in 1937 to capture power in the provinces, the North West Frontier Province—91.84 per cent of whose population is Muslim—returned the Congress to power and ever since this predominantly Muslim province has been an ardent supporter of Gandhi and the Congress. Their leader, Gaffar Khan, is an important member of the Congress cabinet. Last year the Congress elected Abul Kalam Azad, a distinguished Indian Muslim theologian and scholar, as its official president. When the Congress formed provincial cabinets four years ago, they included in every cabinet a Muslim member. Thus the Muslims are behind the Congress and are as freedom loving as any other Indian for the simple reason that the fundamental problems of poverty and political bondage affect them all.

But the British have consistently played one group against another and have succeeded occasionally in fomenting distrust between these two major religious groups. The result is occasionally a communal leader like Mr. Jinnah rises up and claims to speak on behalf of the Muslims. Claims such as his have been often disputed by the Muslims themselves, for the reason that thousands of Muslims are members of the Congress, as explained already, and follow Gandhi, Nehru and Azad. There are besides 45 millions of Momins, a sub-division of Muslims who have repudiated the claims of Jinnah. Then there are Ahrars, another group of Muslims who subscribe to the Congress creed of independence for India. Then there are the Muslim Nationalist Party, the Bengal Muslim Peasant Party and the influential League of Muslim Divines—all these support Gandhi and the Congress. There are more Muslims in the Congress than in Jinnah's communal party. While the Congress represent every Indian interest and speak on behalf of India's millions, Jinnah is

no more than a self-appointed leader. The British, when it suits them, use Jinnah as a comfortable ally and broadcast his argument that in a free India there will be a Hindu tyranny over a Muslim minority. Since Jinnah does not even represent the majority of the Muslims, the logic of his position has led him to voice the British sponsored view that democracy is not suited to India! And yet Islam is a very democratic religion.

It is true that there had been clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims. In Bengal, for example, the majority of the population is Muslim. In that province, however, landlords, usurers, and the wealthy class in general are predominantly Hindus. Clashes between these communities have been predominantly economic in origin. Instead of eliminating these differences, the British, closing their eyes to the fundamental economic problems involved, palmed it off as an irreconcilable religious conflict. As Mrs. John Gunther aptly puts it:

"In Palestine the British say that the Arab Muslims are a minority and therefore must be protected against the Jews. In India the British say the Indian Muslims are a minority and therefore must be protected against the Hindus. Actually neither the Jews nor the Hindus have harmed the Muslims in any way. The crux of the whole matter is that the British are using all of them alike, Jews, Arabs, other Muslims and the Hindus, against each other as sacrificial goats on the mirage altar of imperial interests."

The Muslims in India are only technically a minority and do not resemble the racial minorities of Europe. Even from the numerical point of view, they are in a majority in certain provinces like Bengal, the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province. These eighty millions of organized and powerful Indian Muslims cannot be regarded as a political minority weak enough to be exploited in a democratic government. Hindus and Muslims in a free India can live together as peacefully as Catholics and Protestants live in U.S.A. The traditional tolerance of Hindu India, which directly accounts for the existence of this and other minorities in the country, must dispel this fear of a Hindu majority treading over the rights of a minority. The Congress has clearly laid down that the rights of all minorities would be protected with adequate safeguards when the constitution of a free India comes to be written. But certainly no minority, political, religious and economic, should be allowed to stem the tide of Indian independence nor hinder its progress towards freedom, for after all the majority also has its own rights.

But Mr. Jinnah whose attitude is comparable to that of Konrad Henlein of the Sudetenland crisis, would like to divide India and set up a separate Muslim State. Like Henlein he seeks to split the national unity in the interests and with the support of an outside Imperialist power. Unlike Henlein, however, he does not have the support of Muslim powers. For these powers—Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and



Iran—will not have him because they are intensely nationalistic and like India are concerned with securing and maintaining their national sovereignty. They are like the Chinese Muslims who are proud of their country and are fighting to preserve their country's freedom.

Muslim statesmen of such near eastern Mohammedan countries as Turkey and Egypt have not only disapproved the attitude of Mr. Jinnah and his Muslim League but have expressed their sympathetic approval of the nationalist aspirations of the Indian National Congress. The visit of Mr. Nehru some months ago to Egypt and his discussions with Mr. Nahas Pasha led to the visit of an Egyptian Wafdist delegation to the annual session of the Indian National Congress. This rising tide of nationalism of these near eastern Muslim countries serves as a check to Mr. Jinnah's Pan-Islamism. And yet Mr. Jinnah wants to partition India into two—one a Hindu and another a Muslim India!

Mr. Jinnah's plan of partitioning India into two independent and sovereign Hindu and Muslim states with nothing in common except perhaps the British rulers has been received with mixed feelings even by the Muslims. It is interesting to note what Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, a distinguished Indian Muslim, a member of Jinnah's Muslim League and above all the present premier of the non-congress Punjab province says about this "Pakistan Scheme" as it is called. "If Pakistan meant Muslim Raj in the Punjab" he said recently "I would have nothing to do with it. I visualize a free Punjab in which all communities would share self-government. Let everybody have freedom but not freedom to dominate. I would tell everybody from whatever quarter 'Hands off the Punjab'." And Pakistan if ever realized will be nothing but Muslim Raj frequently playing second fiddle to the British Raj.

In these days where provincialism is being replaced by nationalism which in its turn is yielding to internationalism, Jinnah's talk of creating and perpetuating sectarianism in a homogenous country comes as a shock. But if ever this should come to pass it would definitely mean the ruin of the country under the perpetual domination of a third party like the British. It is no wonder therefore, that this finds favor with the British, for they have already perpetrated this type of division in Ireland between Ulster and Eire and have attempted the same in Jerusalem. They have long exploited this possibility in India, for as early as 1884 Sir John Strachey said:

"The existence side by side of hostile creeds among the Indian people is one of the strong points in our political position in India."

The real minorities in India on the other hand, however, are the Christians (the result of foreign proselytising missions beginning with the latter half of the nineteenth century), the Parsees (the Persian refugees that came to India in the thirteenth century) and the Sikhs (a group of militant protestant Hindus). These do not ask for any protection or safeguards from the Hindu majority. In fact all these three groups are pro-

gressive, nationalistic and support the Congress for Indian unity. Thus the Indian minority and the communal question is more an artificial creation of the British than a serious indigenous stumbling block to India's freedom. Impartial world opinion must be tired of the communal red herring that the British draw across whenever the talk of India's freedom comes up.

## The Indian Princes

The second major argument of the British against India's independence is the Princely Order. These Princes, 562 in number, are descendants of those who were exercising some sort of political authority in different parts of the country before the European traders found their way to India. Then began a series of conflicts between these native rulers and the British, the French and the Dutch all of whom were trying for political supremacy in India. After waging these bloody wars, the British ousted the French and other European traders and colonists and defeated most of the native rulers and established their supremacy. But some Indian rulers who were more powerful than even the British were left alone. Later the British compromised with them guaranteeing their integrity at the expense of controlling their external relations. To-day these Princes, though under the direct supervision of the British rule, have been allowed to enjoy a large measure of personal rule.

These States which are thus relics of a bygone medieval and feudal order, have no democratic Governments, no civil liberties, nor for that matter, any civilized codes. With the exception of half a dozen benevolent despotisms, the rest of them are undiluted autocracies. The moral turpitude in the personal lives of most of these Princes, their huge incredible palace expenditure and the general gross maladministration constitute a living scandal in India. The stark poverty of their subjects is in vivid contrast to the vulgar ostentation, pomp and opulence of the rulers. Their people have been isolated from even the little political and economic progress that British India has registered. In recent years under the inspiration of the Congress people of these States have been organizing and demanding democratic governments. But these peaceful and popular movements have been put down with a ruthlessness that reminds one of the Gestapo. The British have been conniving with these princes in denying these elementary human rights to the subjects on the ground that they have treaties and pledges with the Princes to protect them against aggression without and rebellion from within. Strangely enough it is this autocratic appendage of the British in India that is shouting loudest about helping Britain save democracy in Europe!

The Congress and the rest of India rightly feel that the Indian States system is completely out of date, semi-feudal and an obstruction



to the progress and advancement of the people. In a world where autocracy as embodied in this system has long ceased to exist and where even constitutional thrones are tottering, it is too much to tolerate the existence of these petty potentates. Therefore progressive India demands their liquidation. And the close association of this system with British Imperialism involves a danger to the Indian people. If the rulers of these states do not establish responsible government or voluntarily abdicate their arbitrary rights in keeping with the demands of their subjects and the spirit of the times, they are bound to disappear sooner or later when the British power, their bulwark in India, is overthrown. It is therefore no wonder that the British cite these bejewelled Maharajas and belted Nawabs as one of their sacred obligations that debar them from declaring India free.

## The defense of India

The third and final argument of the British Government against relaxing its hold on India is the question of India's defense. And the very thought of India's defense creates in the minds of the British rulers fantastic visions of India falling a ready victim to German, Russian or Japanese aggression. What about India's defense against the rapacious expansionist policy of aggressive nations? After all, why should the British give up India and toss it to the Japanese? If all the fantastic conjectures of nervous critics are taken into consideration, there is no power in Asia or even in Europe that has not some deep-rooted design on India. But to the military experts there are at present only two workable strategic frontiers that will give access into India. One is of course Japan in the east across British Burma and French Indo-China and Thailand, and second Russia in the north with the strip of Afghanistan in between.

But the possibility of a future aggression is no sensible argument against the freedom of India for the simple reason that no country in the world to-day is free from the aggressive intentions of some other country. The truth is, no country, however strong she might be, is absolutely safe so long as the world is based on the present economic structure of poverty in the midst of plenty. If this argument against Indian independence has any meaning it should mean that the French should be under the perpetual domination of the Nazis just because they failed to defend their freedom. Or for that matter, the fall of Britain, if ever it should come to pass, let us assume due to her military weakness as contrasted with the strength of Germany, should be no argument in favor of the Nazi domination of the British.

It is of utmost importance to recognize that England is not interested in the defense of India. Rather she is interested in the defense of

her position in India both against competitive imperialists and the Indian people. Defense of any country depends primarily on three factors: men, material and morale. India with her 400 millions should be able to provide sufficient man power to defend the country against any foe. The British, however, have prevented the Indian people from making any use of this possibility. Years of compulsory disarmament has made India almost unmanly. They have not allowed the training of Indian officers beyond the very lowest ranks. They restrict recruitment almost entirely to those sections of the population which they consider to be untouched by nationalist sentiment—the so-called martial classes.

Actually instead of using the Indian army to defend India the British have sent Indian troops to fight in Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Iraq, to man the defenses of Singapore and Hongkong, and even to fly as aviators in the "Battle of Britain." On the other hand they have brought Australian and British troops into India to serve as garrisons, thus demonstrating that they are more interested in suppressing the Indian people than defending their frontiers. Ever since the Ehariwali Rifles (Indian troops) refused to fire on an Indian crowd, the British have been unwilling to rely on Indian troops for maintenance of "law and order" in India.

If Britain were really interested in India's defense, she would have encouraged the rapid industrialization of India; instead, except when the needs of British Empire demanded it, they have seriously discouraged it. During the last war, as in the present, industries in India were encouraged to make up the inadequacies of British industries. But when the war was over the progress of Indian industrialization was arrested, impairing not only the possibilities of Indian self-defense but also the possibilities of raising Indian living standards. Until very recently, while pretending that British protection was necessary to defend India from Japanese aggression, shipment of Indian pig iron to Japan was encouraged by the British!

The experience of recent years has demonstrated that people fighting for their freedom fight best. The Indians, like the Chinese or the Spanish peoples, would fight heroically to secure and defend their freedom, but not for the maintenance of British domination. The British seem to be following the French policy in Indo-China. There, too, the people of the country were prevented from participating adequately in their own defense with the consequence that Indo-China has fallen into the hands of the Japanese.

Nationalist India is conscious of the threat of Japan to the peoples of the East. True, there was a time, especially after 1904, the year of Admiral Togo's victory over the Imperial Russian fleet, when India looked up to Japan and marvelled at her phenomenal rise to power. Even to-day perhaps some Indians derive a sort of vicarious pleasure when a Japanese soldier in the Far East slaps an Englishman and hu-



miliates the pride of one who seems so arrogant to an Indian. But ever since Japan began her adventure in China, she has definitely alienated India. India's sympathy with the Chinese people in their struggle has been so great as to result in an effective boycott of things Japanese. The Indian National Congress has sent medical units and money to China as tangible tokens of her moral sympathy. Jawaharlal Nehru, who shares with Gandhi the leadership of India's millions, flew to Chungking some months ago not only to convey the Indian greetings of goodwill to the Chinese people but also to confer with the Generalissimo Chian Kai-shek about certain problems which are common to the peoples of China and India. Any coordination of the efforts of these two peoples who together constitute roughly two fifths of the human race with great economic and political possibilities, is bound to have a powerful effect on the shape of things to come.

The other great bogey held up by the British is "Red Imperialism." How do Indian nationalists react to this "red menace"? Between India and Russia stands, besides Afghanistan, the most formidable natural barrier in the world, the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush with insurmountable peaks and only the Khyber Pass as an inlet. An Indian army of 25,000 crack troops, according to military experts, can easily keep at bay a million or more soldiers at this pass for an indefinitely long time. But if they cannot, well, who is to be blamed?

The British government in India have spent the last half a century and billions of Rupees in reinforcing this natural frontier. If in spite of this an Indian army cannot defend this frontier it is a glaring indictment of British rule in India. But it should be pointed out that China, whose borders are far more exposed than those of India, has not only not been invaded by Russia but on the contrary, according to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, has received from Russia the most consistent support in her struggle to resist Japanese aggression.

In a word, the best answer to the British argument that the defense of India could not be left to an Indian government and that a free India would not be able to defend herself, is that of Gandhi. He said: "If India is strong enough to gain her independence she would be strong enough to defend that independence."

## War Efforts and Repression

When India was declared a belligerent country against her will, the parting of ways between the British Imperialists and the Indian Nationalists became definite and clear. With the withdrawal of the Congress members from the Central Legislative Assembly and the resignation of the Congress Governments in the provinces, the country experienced a

sullen suspense. The Congress vacillated. Gandhi began a series of interviews with the Viceroy over Britain's war aims in their relation to India and the possibility of a provisional National Government at the centre. Impatient with the slow progress of the negotiations between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Congress left wing leader Subhas Chandra Bose was for issuing to the British Government a six months ultimatum to definitely recognize the Indian case for freedom, failing which, he suggested an immediate mass civil disobedience movement! But the High Command of the Congress did not want to precipitate a crisis till Gandhi explored all the possible avenues of a compromise.

Meanwhile the huge and coercive apparatus that the Government had set up to collect money and material was causing pronounced hardship to the people. In every village, town and city there was established a "War Efforts Committee." These officially sponsored and controlled committees call upon everybody to contribute, irrespective of ability or desire. Government employees were compelled to contribute several days salary for the war fund. Official pressure has been brought to bear upon those who refused or demurred against these collections. All kinds of unhealthy methods have been employed in collecting money. For instance in the villages the poor and ignorant peasants have been told that the taxes have been increased, and more than what is legitimately due as a tax has been collected. Conditions in factories and mills are no better. The Viceroy has authorized factory owners to make deductions from workers' wages to contribute to the war fund at a time when prices are skyrocketing. In the city of Cawnpore where workers protested against this exaction, a punitive police tax amounting to two weeks salary was levied and a garrison of troops was stationed in the town.

A wave of strikes and lockouts has broken out all over the country in textile factories, jute mills, coal mines and oil wells. Leaders of workers and Labor organizations who took part in these demonstrations have almost invariably been imprisoned. All those leaders who protested openly against these compulsory contributions and the Government's high-handed action have been arrested and jailed on the ground that they were hindering the "successful prosecution of the war effort." Gandhi himself has come out with complaints against these forced contributions out the Viceroy does not do anything beyond assuring that he would look into such "hard cases." It is possible that the Indian Princes give those huge sums voluntarily but even there the British Residents take care to see that the Princes do not protest too openly against those inordinate demands on their purses. In the face of all this the Government frequently declares that the contributions to the war funds have been absolutely voluntary!

All those who have explained to the people the Indian nationalist view of the issues that are at stake on the present European conflict and those who have condemned these happenings in India, were arrested



and jailed. The ordinances, the War decrees and the emergency legislation and above all the elastic provisions of the Defense of India Act have been used to detain people on mere suspicion and hold them indefinitely without any regular trial. Events have been moving at such an alarming rate that the Indian newspapers published daily under the captions of "March of Repression" or "Defense of India Act at work" several columns of names of persons arrested and jailed. Subsequently, publishing these facts also became an offense, for the newspapers were banned from reporting or publishing anything that even suggested India's anti-war sentiments. Newspapers were asked to submit their editorials to the censoring authorities before publishing them. One newspaper instead of submitting to this humiliating regulation (which means that the Government wants to dictate the editorials of newspapers) left its editorial columns blank. Thus all kinds of bans, restrictions and prohibitory orders began to hedge round the freedom of the press. When Gandhi's famous weekly *The Harijan* was served with a warning, he preferred to suspend its publication under protest, to continuing it under these countless restrictions.

## Gandhi's Obedient Disobedience

Thus it became clear that Gandhi could not profess or preach even his Non-violent philosophy. To be sure of this, Gandhi asked the Viceroy permission to carry on his usual work on non-violent lines. The Viceroy refused him permission to preach or write about non-violence or pacifism on the ground that "it would hinder recruitment to the army and the general war effort and the successful termination of the war." This refusal led Gandhi to take further steps. Before launching upon his Passive Resistance or Obedient Disobedience or what he calls "the individual Satyagraha," he wrote:

"Lest it might be said that the Congress fights because it failed to get power I told His Excellency the Viceroy in the plainest words possible that the Congress has no desire to mount to power at the expense of a single national interest. It seeks no power save for the whole nation. Therefore he will have no opposition from the Congress if he forms a cabinet composed of representatives of different parties. The Congress would be content to be in opposition in so far as the war effort is concerned and so long as the Government machinery has to subserve imperialist ends. The immediate issue is not independence. The immediate issue is the right to exist, that is the right of self-expression which broadly put means free speech. This the Congress wants not merely for itself but for all, the only restraint being the complete observance of non-violence. I hold that condition answers all the difficulties by whomsoever raised."

As can be seen the issue on which Gandhi launched upon the present struggle is not on immediate independence, not even on independence at all, but freedom of speech. Of course this fight for civil liberties is a part and parcel of India's larger fight for political and economic freedom. Gandhi has been eager to avoid a fight and to compromise if that would mean an honorable and peaceful settlement between the British Government and India. The British Government refused to meet him even half way.

Therefore Gandhi drew up a list of 1,500 devoted adherents of non-violence to defy this war dictatorship. The individual civil resistance that Gandhi has started has neither embarrassed the Government nor hindered its war efforts for the whole movement is nothing but an expression of India's moral protest. Gandhi as the sole leader announces the name of the speaker, the time and place. This information is released to the press, and the local police; the magisterial authorities are officially informed by Gandhi and the speaker himself. Of course a huge audience gathers to hear the speech. At the scheduled time the speaker arrives but almost at his heels come the police van and the police officers. When the speaker begins his pacifist speech he is arrested and taken away. The next morning he is rushed through a formal trial. The magistrate asks him some such question as "Are you opposed to this war?" The answer of course is in the affirmative, and he is then sentenced to a number of years but generally supposed to be under detention for the duration of the war.

This movement began with a pacifist speech by Vinoba Bhave, a trusted member of Gandhi's household. He was arrested and jailed. The sentences are often progressive for while the meek Bhave got four months simple imprisonment the militant Nehru got four years rigorous imprisonment. But the circumstances of Nehru's arrest were rather peculiar. After receiving his instructions from Gandhi at Wardha he was on his way to Allahabad where he was to speak. But he was arrested on board the train and taken off at a wayside station straight to a jail. There he was tried *in camera* for a speech he did not deliver! The trial was not open to the public not even to the press. The next day an official communique announced that Nehru was jailed "for infusing a spirit of defiance in the people" in his tour of some villages a month earlier.

Since then many a Congress leader has found his way to prison. The swelling ranks of these Congress nationalist pacifist prisoners include Moulana Azad, the Muslim President of the Congress, six ex-presidents including Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, twelve Speakers and deputy Speakers of provincial legislatures, members of the Congress Working Committee (the High Command of the Congress), more than a hundred members of the Congress Executive Committee, six premiers of the provincial governments including C. Rajagopalachari, more than a score of honorable ministers and thousands of the rank and file. A modest computation

of the number of these prisoners to-day exceeds 50,000. Impressed with the peaceful progress of the struggle Gandhi recently announced that he might soon convert the individual civil resistance into a mass movement. Then of course the British Government will have to find shelter in the jails for a few millions of these nationalists. Gandhi in the meanwhile continues to announce the names, and this strange but striking struggle for freedom goes on.

These activities have been but a pale reflection of the seething discontent of the dispossessed of India. The peasants, already suffering under the combined weight of a semi-feudal economy and the post-war crises have been hard hit by falling agricultural prices, increased taxes and rising living costs. The workers, with the exception of highly skilled munition workers, have suffered similarly.

The addition of these burdens to those already borne have not been accepted passively. Thus, on October 2, 1939, while the Congress leaders were engaged in lengthy diplomatic parleys with the Viceroy, 90,000 Bombay cotton mill workers carried out a one day strike against the war and the repressive measures of the Government. Following this, the country witnessed the greatest wave of strikes in its history. Demonstrations have swept the rural districts as well, while a number of notable examples of cooperation among peasants, workers and students have been effected.

## India's Unwilling Cooperation

Do these bitter experiences of the past and the present agitation for freedom of speech and the right to exist mean that India is not cooperating with Britain even to a small extent? The answer is: No, for Britain is deriving all possible benefit from India's men and material but "Cooperation" is not the right word. Yes India's raw materials and industries, money and troops are entirely at Britain's disposal even without asking for them and are proving vital in her present role as the Liberator of the subject people. But it should be repeated that this help and cooperation" is not the right word. Yes, India's raw materials and industries are the result of people's free will, choice and sympathy.

If in Iraq today the Indian troops are fighting it is not because they want to or that the Indian people have anything against the Iraqis but because they have been ordered to and they cannot resist. It is true there are more than 10,000 Indian soldiers stationed in England now. These soldiers escaped from Dunkerque and are making the best use of their stay in England. Indian troops stand guard at the near and far eastern entrances to the British Indian Empire at Alexandria and Aden, Hongkong and Singapore. In Ethiopia and Libya Indian soldiers trained in mountain and desert fighting have been used to defeat the Italians.



As for the air force aviation is being encouraged and Indians are trained to become pilots. There is a well equipped Indian squadron stationed at the North West Frontier. They are supposed to keep watch at the frontier and fight if necessary against future aggressors in that no man's land. But more often in practice they have to bomb the frontier Indian people, for the followers of the Fakir of Ipi still constitute a thorny problem to the British in India. The Indian North West Frontier problem cannot be discussed here. If the British bomb those stalwart but starving Indian tribes, well, it is just "police action"!

What about India's industrial expansion as a result of the present war? The experience of the last war is being repeated. During the last war new industries were started and a fillip was given to old industries. This was done not to make India economically self-sufficient or to place her definitely in the industrialized map of the world nor even to convert her raw materials into manufactured commodities within her own borders, but just to supplement British industrial efforts to meet the huge war demands. And once the war was over this policy was put an end to and India reverted back to her old position of supplier of raw materials and buyer of British manufactured articles. Today as a result of the present war there is a hectic survey of India's vast economic resources and there is a spate of proposals, plans and schemes to develop hitherto neglected Indian industries and create new ones to meet the desperate war demand. There was recently even a proposal to repeal certain clauses in the Ancient Indian Monuments Preservation Act to take over the old cannons, armour and other old hardware from the Indian museums and turn them over to the Indian Tata Iron and Steel works to produce ammunition for the British overseas forces. There is also a proposal to float a Government-assisted Indian aircraft company to manufacture bombers for the use of the British army and the navy. When this plant is established in Mysore, India will produce war planes next year. But it will be a safe guess to say that if hostilities cease tomorrow this plan will fall through!

Yes, today India is booming industrially to meet the war demands for medical stores, leather harness, jute bags, ammunition and rifles, iron and coal and bombers and what not. That a terrible war should have been necessary to inspire the Government to take stock of India's resources and plan to industrialize the country and actually put those plans into operation is sufficient commentary on the "Let alone" policy that the Government pursued till the beginning of the present war. One need not be over-optimistic about this ill balanced industrialization. The result of these efforts will be just the same as in the last war. A few Indian capitalists will become millionaires and the majority of the Indian millions will be reduced to incredible poverty. And no amount of industrialization can be counted as a compensation for the lack of freedom. What then is the prospect for the Indian struggle for independence?

## The prospect

The question of India's freedom should no longer be treated as a private quarrel or a domestic disagreement between England and India by any nation much less by the U.S.A. The problem of India affects the whole world not only because it concerns the welfare of a fifth of the human race but also because her struggle is part of the larger world struggle for Democracy, Freedom and Peace. The freeing of India will mean a great step towards the liberty, the equality and the essential unity of the human race and towards the final victory of world peace.

President Roosevelt in his recent message to Congress said: "We are committed to the full support of those resolute people everywhere who are resisting aggression . . . freedom means the supremacy of the human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them."

What do these words mean to India in her present struggle? India is fighting for those very rights that the President refers to, but should the fact of Britain being the aggressor in our case rob the message of its meaning? Does the President's promise of help extend to India? India does not ask for men, money or material. All that she wants is this country's and the world's moral sympathy. Will America ask Britain for a definite declaration of post-war emancipation of India and other subject people in her far flung Empire before she tries to save the British brand of democracy abroad? It is a tragic irony that Britain that denies life and liberty to India is battling for her own life to-day! Herein lies the acid test of America's sympathy with the lot of Indians and other subject peoples.

Britain to-day seems to be repeating the errors of 1776. When all reasoning and protesting failed, the American people embarked upon a revolutionary war of independence. The people passed through suffering and sacrifice only to win their Independence—to the Indian mind one of the most cherished and memorable chapters in the world's history. To-day India is faced with the same problem: She has demonstrated her desire to achieve her aspirations through negotiations and non-violence. India's fight has been singularly free from malice and ill-will towards any people including the English people, though their imperialist system has been India's traditional enemy. The fight has been long and weary and has passed through many a vicissitude but now it has assumed a new meaning in the light of the issues that are at stake in the present world war. And fight she will till she ends the system that exploits her. But if Britain's answer to this peaceful and legitimate demand of India is one of brutal repression who can say what will happen? As one after another of India's stalwarts, chosen and trusted leaders of the people with thousands of the rank and file disappear behind prison bars it is difficult to foresee the outcome.

What will happen if Britain misses to-day the splendid opportunity of meeting India's demand? To-day the Indian independence movement is headed by one who is considered a saint and a statesman the like of whom is not born every year or generation but once in a century. And he demands only the minimum justice. He will be satisfied to begin with even Dominion-Status—the substance of independence, though it is doubtful whether there will be any such status at the end of this war. His demand is just, it is expedient, it is inevitable. If Britain does not deal with the matter right now when Gandhi lives and leads the movement on absolutely non-violent lines and bring about a just and honorable settlement, the consequences of the failure are uncertain. If Britain refuses to act now the Indian people will ponder over their past and possibly find fault with their unconventional weapons and resort to an open war as other nations understand it. Then it will be tragic both for India and England but when it comes to that India will be prepared to take it, for freedom is something worth dying for. The experience of the United States and Ireland has indicated that the imperialists of Great Britain will yield only to force.

Hence the prospect of non-violence is not very bright. Even to-day the crushing impact of recent events in Europe and the Far East has taught India that Gandhi's philosophy of passive resistance is a cry in the wilderness. The people often wonder whether non-violence would pay in resisting foreign aggression. There was recently a momentuous and prolonged discussion between the idealistic Gandhi who believes in the unlimited possibilities of non-violence and some of his realistic followers who are convinced to the contrary on the technique of non-violence and its place in the modern world. They realized only too well that non-violence to succeed in a world where acquisitive aggressiveness still holds sway, must be organized widely to permeate in the minds of the masses—rather a difficult task. And even in a game of mutual slaughtering like war the contending nations have to agree upon some code. But in India in the non-violent struggle there is no such agreement that really matters.

While discussing with Mahatma Gandhi five months ago in India about the potency and the possibilities of the non-violent technique in the modern world the present writer happened to ask him as to what he would propose to do if Hitler were to turn his attention to India. Gandhi after some thought felt assured of his unshakeable faith in the power of Non-violence as an instrument to offer resistance even to the Fuehrer, nor did he distrust the Fuehrer's capacity to respond to true Non-violence. Though strange his faith is invincible.

Gandhi while leading the bitter struggle to wrest freedom from Britain's unwilling hands has made it clear today that he does not wish well to India at the expense of Britain just as he does not wish well to Britain at the expense of Germany. Talking of his Non-violence he said recently "Hitlers will come and go. Those who believe that when



the Fuehrer dies or is defeated his spirit will die err grievously. What matters is how we react to such a spirit—violently or non-violently. If we react violently we feed that spirit. If we react non violently we sterilize it.”

Nehru was recently asked what he would do if Hitler invaded India. “If Hitler or any other invader attacks us we Indians will fight to the death. Rather we will perish in the struggle than submit to Hitler’s will,” was his bold reply. But with what? He as well as the people know that non-violence would not stop Hitler any more than it has stopped Britain. In the midst of all this heart searching when the Congress tried to appraise critically the value of the old weapon and forge a new one if necessary, Gandhi sat almost alone pleading with his disbelieving followers not to compromise on the issue of Non-violence. He argued that in a world where destruction and devastation have come to be the order of the day, India’s peaceful struggle might look less impressive but more important for after all there is something called the Spirit of Man. Hers, he contended, is more heroic and hopeful for the world for she gives life instead of taking it. To Gandhi India’s disarmament is its deathless treasure while some of his followers consider it to be the danger of India. Now is the time, argued Gandhi, to demonstrate the power of non-violence to a world steeped in savage slaughter. And if arms and ammunition have failed other nations to protect their freedom what could India expect to gain from those death-dealing instruments of modern warfare? But he pleaded in vain, for the Congress compromised on the issue of non-violence. They decided that violence could not be completely eschewed in case of foreign aggression. But strangely they decided to continue the non-violent technique in their fight with Britain. This compromise is creating problems. If it is permissible to repel the hypothetical new aggressor with bullets and bombs, tanks and torpedoes, why should there be this binding compunction against their use in the struggle with Britain, the old aggressor? This is the question that is simmering in the minds of the Indian youth to-day. The future stages of India’s struggle for freedom will largely depend on the answer to this question. And once Mahatma Gandhi goes out of the political picture, India’s leadership is bound to fall on the shoulders of younger and more militant leaders, leaders who believe that in the history of all suppressed nations there comes a day when the tea has to be thrown into the harbor.

When that day dawns, what will happen to the British Imperialism in India and without India what will the British empire be worth? Already the path of History is strewn with the fragments of once powerful empires—Egyptian, Persian, Roman, Mayan, Atzec, Spanish and Napoleonic to mention only a few. And to this strange but inexorable Law of the Rise and Fall of Empires, the Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs, Romanovs and Ottomans have bowed down in our own century. And of the four other modern empires, three, the French, Dutch and Belgian are lying prostrate at the heels of Nazism. The British empire continues to battle

for life. And the sands are running out. Will British statesmen wait for that dismal day and allow her empire to go the way all empires eventually go, or will they take courage and give content to the noble phrases they utter by conceding India's right to freedom—freedom to frame her own constitution and solve her own economic and social problems? The people of India—the students, peasants, workers and intellectuals—are organizing and demanding an answer. They will not wait long.

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## Addendum, August 25th, 1941

The outbreak early this summer of war between Hitler Germany and the Soviet Union has, of course, profound implications for the cause of Indian freedom.

Since that event occurred, I have had no communication with the independence movement in India and therefore cannot in any direct sense speak for it.

I feel confident, however, that my countrymen, and particularly their progressive nationalist leaders, will realize the magnitude of the meaning for us of this immense development; and will want to give their complete support to the growing alliance against Hitler fascism.

Certainly Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union opens up the possibility, should he be victorious, of bringing his forces of enslavement to our very borders. India has watched with great interest the social and economic development of the Asiatic peoples in the U.S.S.R., and, whatever its difference of opinion about socialism, communism, etc., knows that this promising development would be not only arrested, but completely reversed, by a Hitler victory in that part of the world.

Thus this new phase of the war gives the people of India powerful additional social and military reasons for wanting to see fascism defeated.

This fact serves only to highlight their need for, and determination to achieve political freedom. For only by enjoying the freedom to organize and direct their own resources can they make their maximum contribution to the cause of world freedom.

The people in India must be watching with extreme interest the forthcoming conference of anti-Hitler powers in Moscow, particularly since their country has been designated to be the arsenal of democracy in the East. They must be hoping for the success of such a conference. But the democratic world must also be made to realize that India's 400,000,000 people will be without representation there.

The simplest physical reason, political reasons apart, for such lack of representation is that India's principal anti-fascist leaders are today behind prison bars. Outstanding anti-fascist spokesmen like Nehru, and the thousands of nationalist trade union leaders and other progressives like him, must be freed before India can make her potentially powerful contribution to the cause of anti-fascism.

This, from the point of view of India, is the essential challenge to Britain today. The people of India want to make their fullest contribution to the world front against fascism. Is Britain determined that they shall not?

S. Chandrasekhar.









